

Using Pronouns Correctly

When you review your writing, check to be sure that each pronoun agrees in person with its antecedent. One common pronoun error is the use of a second-person pronoun (*you*) to refer to a third-person antecedent. To fix such an error, change *you* to an appropriate third-person pronoun as shown in the examples below.

Incorrect At one time, anyone could find shelter if you looked hard enough.

Correct At one time, **anyone** could find shelter if **he or she** looked hard enough.

Incorrect My relatives lived a whole summer in a tent, which you could set up almost anywhere.

Correct My **relatives** lived a whole summer in a tent, which **they** could set up almost anywhere.

When the antecedent of a pronoun is another pronoun, be sure the two pronouns agree in person. Do not shift from *I* to *you*, *they* to *you*, or *one* to *you*.

Incorrect I like it when you can sleep outdoors in warm weather.

Correct I like it when **I** can sleep outdoors in warm weather.

Incorrect They set up camp on the ridge, where you can see the horizon.

Correct **They** set up camp on the ridge, where **they** can see the horizon.

Incorrect If one enjoys astronomy, you can watch the constellations all night.

Correct If **one** enjoys astronomy, **one** can watch the constellations all night.

EXERCISE Correct the following sentences, eliminating the inappropriate use of *you* by writing either a third-person pronoun or a suitable noun on the line.

Sample _____ they Centuries ago, Native Americans lived in the San Francisco Bay area, where you could build various types of houses.

1. _____ The Native Americans made dome-shaped houses out of bulrushes, which you called tule.
2. _____ Adults would build a framework; you would take branches from willow trees and drive them into the ground.
3. _____ Even a small child could help gather the tule, which you would bundle and tie onto the willow framework.
4. _____ The children would help pack down the earthen floor, and then you would put sleeping mats on it.
5. _____ Since people found housing materials growing all around them, you were never homeless for long.

Revising with Style

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Using Only

When revising your writing, check to be sure that the modifiers are where they belong. If you put a modifier in the wrong place, the meaning of your words may be unclear or you may deliver an unintended message.

An especially tricky modifier is the adverb *only*—a small word that has a big effect on meaning. As a general rule, place *only* immediately before the word or group of words it modifies. Take a look at the sentence below:

A few men in the United States are named **only** Bertram.

This sentence seems to say that a few men in the United States are named just Bertram—they have neither a middle name nor a last name. The writer probably meant to say that there aren't many men in the United States named Bertram. The sentence should be revised as follows:

Only a few men in the United States are named Bertram.

EXERCISE None of the sentences below reflect the writer's intended meaning because the word *only* is in the wrong position. Given the meaning described in parentheses at the end of each sentence, use an arrow to mark the correct position of *only*.

Sample Most people know the first name of *only* the painter Raphael.
(Most people don't know his last name was Sanzio.)

1. Some people think that having the right name is the path *only* to success.
(There is no other path.)
2. There was a time when movie stars and con artists *only* changed their names. (No one else did.)
3. The model Norma Jean Baker, for example, changed her name to Marilyn Monroe a short while *only* after signing her first contract with a film studio. (She changed her name not long after signing.)
4. A few people *only* know that John Wayne was the stage name of Marion Morrison.
(Most people do not know.)
5. John Wayne was not *only* the actor's stage name; he appeared in his first few films as Duke Morrison. (He had more than one stage name.)
6. Mathilda isn't the name that means *only* "brave." (Other names also mean "brave.")
7. Graham, however, means *only* "from the gray house." (No other name means that.)
8. In most states, an application and a birth certificate are *only* needed to change one's name legally.
(One doesn't need anything else to change his or her name legally.)

Correcting Double Negatives

When you revise your writing, check to be sure that you haven't made the mistake of using a **double negative**—two negative words in the same clause. The clause *I don't have none* contains two negative words—the contraction *don't* and the adjective *none*. If you *don't* have *none*, then you *do* have *some*. To express a negative idea, you should use only one negative word.

In addition to such negative words as *never*, *no*, *none*, and *not*, the words *scarcely*, *hardly*, and *barely* function as negatives and should not be used with other negative words in the same clause.

Read the examples below and notice how some sentences that include double negatives may be revised in more than one way.

Incorrect He *never* cooks *nothing* exciting for dinner.

Correct He *never* cooks *anything* exciting for dinner.

Incorrect We *can't hardly* wait for a change in the menu.

Correct We *can hardly* wait for a change in the menu.

Correct We *can't* wait for a change in the menu.

Incorrect You *haven't* been reading *no* books on how to cook bugs, have you?

Correct You *haven't* been reading *any* books on how to cook bugs, have you?

Correct You *haven't* been reading books on how to cook bugs, have you?

EXERCISE Rewrite the following sentences, eliminating the double negative in each. If a sentence is correct, write *correct*.

Sample Haven't you never tasted a bug?

Revision Have you never tasted a bug? or Haven't you ever tasted a bug?

1. I know people that can't hardly stand the idea of dining on bugs.

2. There isn't nothing wrong with eating bugs.

3. In some Latin American countries, people don't have no objection to eating the eggs of aquatic insects.

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4. It couldn't be no simpler than placing mats underwater for the insects to lay their eggs on.

5. Once the eggs are laid, gatherers don't wait none to dry the insects' eggs before making the eggs into cakes.

6. In some African countries, the larvae of honeybees aren't no less popular than their honey.

7. If you're in the tropics, you shouldn't get too fond of no dragonflies; they may be ground into a paste and served to you.

8. Can no one in this country see that bugs are an excellent source of protein?

9. Somebody had once tried a chocolate-covered grasshopper and hadn't barely noticed the grasshopper.

10. Don't say nothing against bug dishes until you've tried them.
